



## **Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea**

**Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet**

### **Christopher Robbins Creates Brooms at Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea**

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**BEREA, Ky.** – Christopher Robbins, of Berea, will demonstrate broom making on Saturday, Nov. 22, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.

At the age of 14, Robbins began working in the Broom Shop at the Bittersweet Cabins in Renfro Valley, where he developed a love of broom making. There Robbins had the good fortune of meeting master broom maker Jim Harmon, of Springfield, who helped Robbins refine his skills and acquire the equipment needed to produce brooms.

Robbins makes all of his brooms totally by hand with the assistance of broom making equipment that is 100 or more years old. He uses a 100-year-old winder, constructed with wooden pegs, which is used to attach the broomcorn to the broom handle. His vise, which is used to hold the broom while it is stitched and tied, is dated Sept. 10, 1878.

The broomcorn that Robbins uses to make his brooms is a member of the millet family. This tall plant has woody stalks and little foliage, but looks a bit like sweet corn. It produces bristles laden with seeds rather than an ear. These bristles are processed and dried in various ways, depending on whether they will be used to produce brooms, brushes or floral arrangements.

In 2002, Robbins was juried into the Kentucky Crafted Marketing Program – one of the youngest craftsmen ever to be awarded this honor. He is also a juried member of the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and the Shelton Artisan Guild.

“It feels good to be knowledgeable and able to carry on the art of such an old craft,” Robbins said.

In 2010, Robbins was hired by Berea College to supervise the college’s Broomcraft Program. The College Student Crafts Program is one of many labor departments and learning environments in which Berea College students work as part of their liberal arts education. Broomcraft has been a part of the Berea College Student Craft Program since 1920, when equipment from a broom factory was given to the college.

Brooms by Christopher Robbins are regularly available at the Kentucky Artisan Center, located at 200 Artisan Way, just off Interstate 75 at Berea Exit 77. The center’s exhibits, shopping and travel information areas are open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the cafe is open from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is free.

The Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea currently features works by more than 700 artisans from more than 100 counties across the Commonwealth. Special exhibits on display include “Put a Lid on It: Containers by Kentucky Artisans,” through Feb. 28, 2015; and on display in the lobby is, “Let it Snow” which includes a large Christmas tree featuring artisan ornaments and gifts. For more information about events call 859-985-5448, go to the center’s website at [www.kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov](http://www.kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov) or visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/kentucky.artisan.center](https://www.facebook.com/kentucky.artisan.center).

The Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea is an agency in the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



Christopher Robbins creates functional brooms at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.